

Application No. 10/663,979

MAR 23 2009 Art Unit: 3714

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**5 Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1-28 (Previously Cancelled).

Claim 29 (Currently Amended): A method of playing a slot machine game using a symbol matrix formed by a plurality of rows intersecting with a plurality of columns, with the plurality 10 of rows and columns including a plurality of symbols, comprising:

- a) a player making a wager to play the game;
- b) randomly rearranging the plurality of symbols;
- c) displaying the rearranged symbols in the symbol matrix;
- d) automatically expanding wildcard symbols, if displayed in the symbol matrix, such that each said wildcard symbol:
  - (1) expands by simultaneously occupying two or more positions in the symbol matrix; and
  - (2) expands in all of the predetermined possible directions assigned by the directional indicia displayed on said wildcard symbol;
- e) always replacing the symbol(s) in the path of an expanding wildcard symbol with the expanding wildcard symbol; and
- f) evaluating winning symbol combinations formed using expanded wildcard symbols wherein each said wildcard symbol may act as any other symbol in order

DIRECTIONAL WILDS

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to form a winning symbol combination; and

g) issuing awards for winning symbol combinations following the expansion of all wildcard symbols.

5 Claim 30 (Currently Amended): The method of Claim 29 in which the directional indicia for a wildcard symbol assigns one or more of the following predetermined-possible directions:

- a) upwards from the symbol position in which the wildcard symbol appears;
- b) downwards from the symbol position in which the wildcard symbol appears;
- c) leftwards from the symbol position in which the wildcard symbol appears;
- 10 d) rightwards from the symbol position in which the wildcard symbol appears; or
- e) diagonally from the symbol position in which the wildcard symbol appears.

Claim 31 (Previously Cancelled)

15 Claim 32 (Previously presented): The method of Claim 29 in which letters or words are used as directional indicia displayed on the wildcard symbols.

Claim 33 (Previously Cancelled)